

"Oh! You're getting rational again, are you? Perhaps we can discuss this business calmly after all. No doubt I behaved badly to your sister, and I should like to put things straight if I can. Marriage is out of the question because my wife is alive."

"Divorce," suggested Jim, whose ideas on the subject were derived from the San Francisco press.

"No. I have tried that already," said Sherrit. "Besides, there is not time."

"Then," cried Jim beginning to fume, "what's the use of all this blarney."

"Well, there may be another way. We have a good month yet before the thing need be noticed—more with management. Why not get Miss Fanny a husband?"

"There's something in that," said Jim.

"There's a very great deal in it," said Sherrit. "You leave it to me and keep quiet. It all depends on that. And now if you'll excuse me, I must dress for mess."

As Jim went down the stairs he did not know whether to feel cheap or heroic. Being a dense man he laid the unction of magnanimity to his soul before he was well seated in his trap.

That night Sherrit dined with the Galcommon Militia, who had their mess in the Depot barracks. It was a guest night, and at dinner Denny Cronin sat between young Breen, who was his host, and Sherrit. The dinner was an event to Denny: he felt that he was seeing life. Sherrit, who was an observer, studied him closely. As Denny's shyness thawed under the influence of the Saumur, that did duty for champagne, he began to tell Breen wonderful stories about "me fawthur's place near Shanballymore." Sherrit became more and more interested in this talk, and after a while himself chatted pleasantly with Denny. Before he left the mess, Sherrit knew all he wanted—knew that young Cronin was as weak in mind as he was in knee; that old Cronin was a county magistrate with landed property somewhere in the remoter parts of Galcommon; that Denny was the eldest son, and that he admired tall women—and he went to his room very well satisfied indeed, for he began to see his way out of the tangle. The Fitz-Urses, brother and sister, he felt sure, could not hope for a better solution. He knew the family's fancy for eldest sons, and here was young Cronin, ready to their hand, thinking about Miss Fanny already—for Sherrit had found no difficulty in getting at the fact upon which Denny's admiration for tall women rested.